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ABSTRACT

Distributed by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Education, and Health and Human Services, this pamphlet provides parents with information and advice about their infants in the seventh month of life. Following a brief description of developmental characteristics at this age, the pamphlet offers advice on a variety of topics, including: your baby's new independence, feeding, moving bath time to the "big tub," talking together to help spouses handle stress, fathers and babies, fun on the floor, early intervention and your baby's developing skills, and including the baby's siblings. The pamphlet concludes with a list of relevant information resources for families. (HTH)

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Healthy Start, Grow Smart

Your Seven-Month-Old

Prepared by:

U.S. Department of Agriculture

U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

2002



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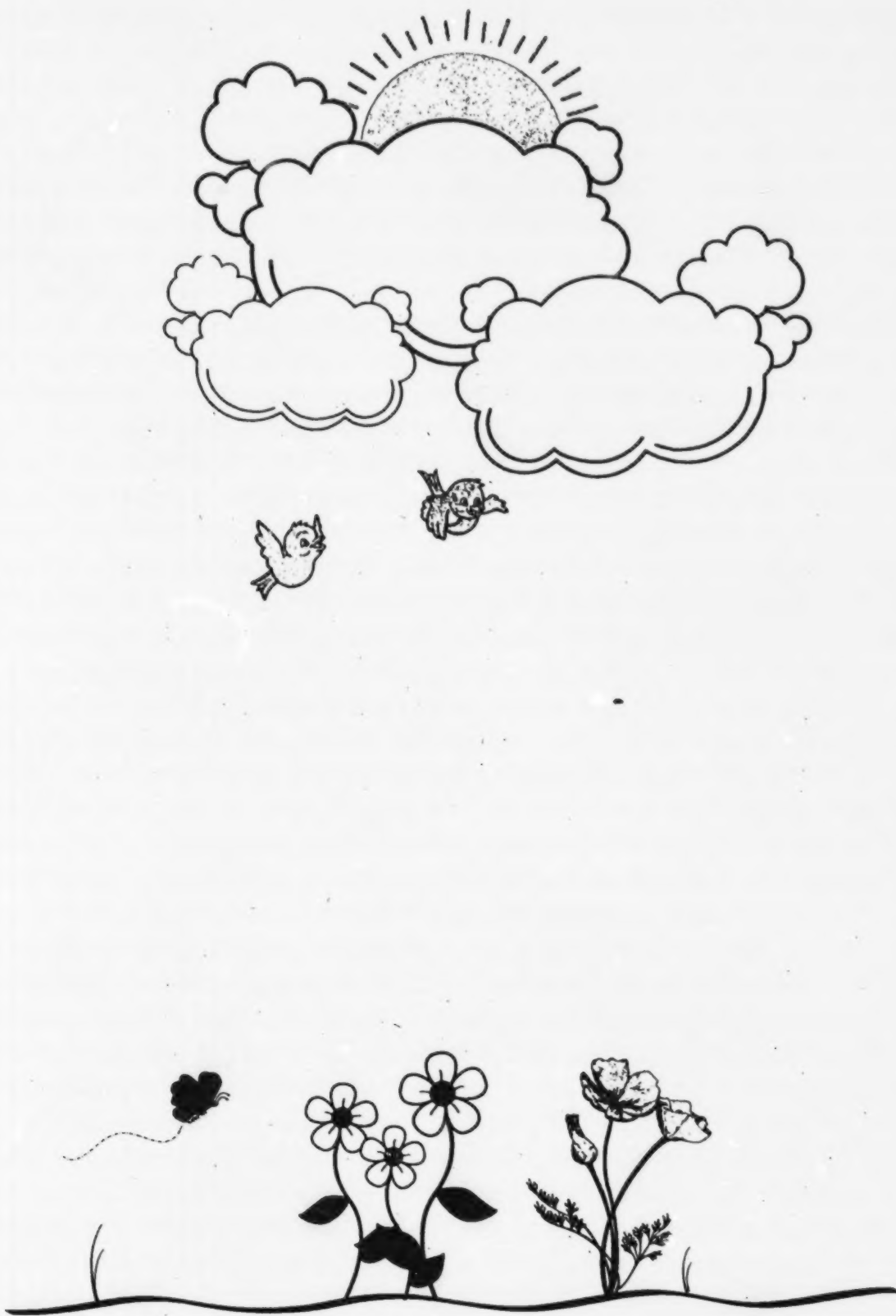
We would like to thank the Texas Department of Health for their cooperation and assistance in bringing this publication to families across the United States. In addition, we recognize the contributions that Susan H. Landry, Ph.D., Craig T. Ramey, Ph.D. and many other individuals made in the development of this magazine.



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Your Seven-Month-Old



At seven months, your baby is doing all kinds of things he could not do even a few weeks ago. He may sit up straight for a moment without falling over. Usually, he sits leaning forward on both hands. He can support his weight on his feet when standing. If you hold him in a standing position, he may bounce up and down. He may be moving around the floor on his belly. He may try to feed himself. He likes to clap, pull, bang, poke and grab with his hands. He makes sounds on purpose.

Being able to do these things makes him happy. When he can do something he wants to do, he may smile, laugh, clap or look for your smile of praise. Smile at him or give him extra hugs when he tries new things.

Trying things over and over can be fun for him. But it can also upset him when he can't do something. He may cry when things don't work out the way he wants. As he does things, he wants you to be there to help him and hug him.

Your baby needs you to show him how to do things. But he may get upset if you try to do things that he thinks he knows how to do.

He may be afraid of strangers. If you leave the room, he may cry because he is afraid. Be sure to give him lots of hugs and smiles. Clap when he does something he wants to do. Give him extra love and care as he goes through this exciting time. He will love you back!



Your Baby's New Independence



Your baby is now playing more with his toys. At seven months, he may try to move around more by crawling on his belly to get a toy. Be sure to inspect your house for possible dangers. Babies find

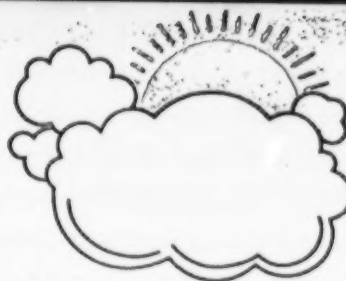
everything. They can see tiny things on the floor and under furniture that you may not see when you are standing. When checking to make sure the floor is a safe place, be sure to get down on the floor yourself, and search carefully with your eyes and hands for any dangers.

Your baby's memory and attention span are increasing. He may try to imitate noises or simple actions, such as clapping. He likes to play peek-a-boo. He may move his head or body around to look for toys that he suddenly cannot see.

Your baby will begin to drop toys on the floor to see you pick them up. He is learning that his rattle makes noise when he hits it or waves it around. He is learning that he can make a noise by banging a toy on the floor or a table. He can move a toy from one hand to the other. He may hold two toys for a very short time.

Your baby knows you. He knows that you are the same person who greets him every morning. He may be shy around people he has not seen before. He may not like it if someone rushes up to him and picks him up. He may need a little time to get used to someone new before he gets picked up by that person.

Your Family's Future



Are you thinking about having another baby?

Would you like your children to be born close together? Or would you like them to be born further apart?

Everyone has a different answer. Some parents wait. They have a second baby after their first child is five or six.

Some parents have their children closer together. Other parents decide to have only one or two children.

Talk to your spouse. Do you both have time and energy for another baby? How much can you give? How will you feed him? How will you give him clothes and medical care? What kind of house or apartment will you need? What do you want for your children?

It makes sense to plan your family. Planning ahead lets you give the best care to your children. Talk to your doctor, or talk to a nurse at a public health clinic. Ask how you can space your pregnancies.

There are many safe ways to delay getting pregnant until you are ready. Most are simple and cost little. Some work better than others. You can choose the one that is best for you.



Breastfeeding and Pregnancy



Maybe you've heard that you can't get pregnant when you're breastfeeding. That's not always true. It depends on how much you breastfeed. And it depends on when your monthly period returns. Breastfeeding should not be used as the only method of birth control. There are various methods of birth control that work well with breastfeeding. Your doctor can help you choose the one that would work best for you.

Breastfeeding Advice

At seven months, your baby may begin to eat mashed or pureed vegetables and fruit in addition to infant cereal. These foods are not as important as breast milk. Do not worry if he is more interested in playing with his foods than eating them. Nursing him will meet most of his food needs.

Sometimes, your baby may bite down on your breast with his new teeth while he is breastfeeding. He doesn't know that it hurts you. Usually, this happens late in the feeding. If it does, slip your finger in between his gums and gently say, "No." If he does it again, slip your finger in between his gums and gently say, "No" again.

To learn more about breastfeeding, you may want to contact your local health department, WIC clinic, hospital, La Leche League or doctor. You can call La Leche League at 1-800-LALECHE or visit their Web site at www.lalecheleague.org/.



Feeding Your Baby



At meal times, your baby may show you that he wants to do things himself. He may want to hold his cup by himself.

You can avoid spills by putting just a little liquid into his plastic cup for him. Or you can give him an empty cup to hold while you feed him from another cup.

Your baby may not always be interested in eating at meal times. He may be more interested in playing with his spoon or his food. This means that meals may take longer than when he was younger. Let him explore. Learning new skills is important.

Never add corn syrup or honey to your baby's food or drink. These foods may contain germs that can make your baby sick.



Moving Bath Time to the "Big Tub"



Your baby may be getting too big for his baby bathtub. You can start bathing him in the family bathtub when he is able to sit up by himself.

Get everything ready before you put your baby in the tub. First, get the soap, washcloth, towel, shampoo and toys together. Then run the water. Test it on the inside of your wrist to be sure the water is warm but not hot. If the water feels hot on your wrist, it is too hot for your baby.

When everything is ready, place your baby in the water. Be sure to stay close to your baby while he is in the water. **Never leave your baby alone when he is in the tub. Do not turn away from your baby when he is in the tub.** A good rule is always to keep one hand on your baby the whole time he is in the tub. He could slip under the water and drown, or he could slip and hit his head.

Baths can be fun and messy, so enjoy this time with your baby. Play games with him. Let him enjoy the water. Because playing in the tub can be messy, put rugs or towels on the floor by the tub so the floor does not get wet. You or your baby could slip on a wet floor.



Let your baby splash all he wants. As you wash him, talk and sing to him. Give him a cup or toy that he can fill up with water and pour out. Put floating toys in the water for him to reach for. Reaching for a toy will help him learn to use his hand to find it.

Give your baby his own washcloth. Encourage him to wash himself as you bathe him. You can make your baby's bath a fun time for both of you.

Take Time for Yourself

It takes a lot of your time to care for a baby. Sometimes you may not have time to do all the things you want to do. You may also forget to take care of yourself. You need to take time for yourself.

Here are some things you can do to take care of yourself:

- ★ Exercise, or take a walk.
- ★ Eat healthy food.
- ★ Spend time resting in a quiet place, reading or listening to music. Do something creative that you enjoy.
- ★ Spend time talking with adults you enjoy. These may be your family, friends or a community group.
- ★ Get enough rest. Check with your doctor if you are always tired.
- ★ Share your thoughts, hopes and beliefs with your spouse, family or friends. Listen to their thoughts, too. Different points of view may help you solve problems.

Your baby will be happier if he has happy parents. Try to do healthy things that make you feel good. This is important. It will help you deal with stress and take better care of your baby.

What's It Like To Be Seven Months Old?



How I grow:

- ★ I creep across the floor, and I may crawl.
- ★ I may help you pull me up to a standing position by keeping my legs straight.
- ★ When you hold me under my arms, I can stand and step in place. I like to look at my feet.
- ★ When I'm lying on my back, I like to bring my feet to my mouth.
- ★ I can hold an object in each hand. I like to bang things together.
- ★ I can sit with a little support.
- ★ I have very good eyesight.
- ★ I am starting to feed myself with my hands.



How I talk:

- ★ I like to imitate the sounds I hear.
- ★ I like to say short sounds, like “ba,” “ma,” “mu,” or “di.” I say several sounds in a row.

How I respond:

- ★ I listen to my own voice and the voices of other people.
- ★ I may cry when my mommy or daddy leaves.
- ★ I like to give hugs and kisses to people I know.
- ★ I only want my favorite people to pick me up.

How I understand:

- ★ I explore with my hands and feet.
- ★ I struggle to get objects that are out of my reach.
- ★ I can find objects that are partly hidden.
- ★ When you bounce a ball in front of me more than once, I expect the next bounce.



Talking Together Helps Spouses Handle Stress

Question

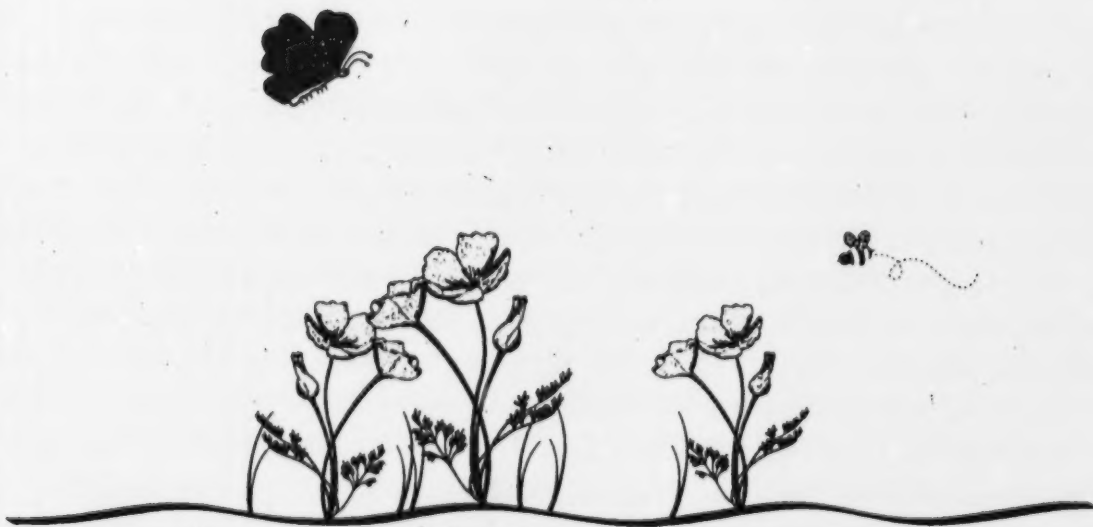
Ever since we had the baby, there's been a lot of stress between my spouse and me. We never seem to have time just to sit and talk anymore. I can't seem to say how I feel. Do you have any suggestions?

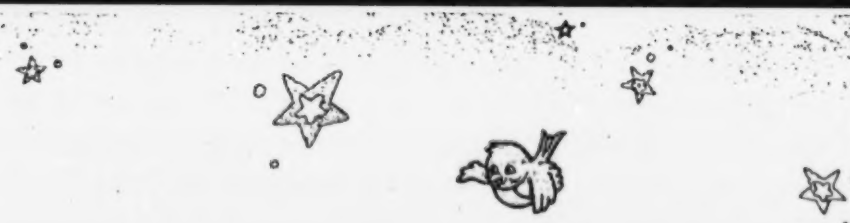
Answer

With all the extra work a baby brings into your life, it is hard for parents to make time for each other.

You may have all kinds of feelings that you need to talk out. You may feel resentment, or you may feel guilt or anger.

Not talking about your feelings can hurt your relationship. As hard as it may seem, you must make time to be alone together. Your spouse probably has things to talk about, too.





Here are some tips on how to talk to each other about what is troubling you:

- ★ Don't blame each other. This will only make the tension between you worse. Avoid saying "you always" or "you never."
- ★ Take turns listening to each other. Listen, and then use your own words to repeat what your spouse says. "So you are saying that you feel left out when I spend so much time with the baby?" Don't interrupt. You will have your turn next.
- ★ When it is your turn to talk, use "I" messages, such as, "I feel like I have to do all of the work." Avoid using "you." Don't say "You never do anything around here."
- ★ Don't expect your spouse to read your mind or guess what you are feeling. Say how you feel.
- ★ Be specific about what is troubling you. You can say "I get upset when you say you'll clean the bathroom, but then you don't do it."
- ★ Be sure to say what you like about what your spouse does. You can say "I like how you're patient with the baby," or "It's good how you handle the shopping."

Having a new baby can make many things in your life more complicated. It may create more work for you and your spouse. Talking through these matters may help you work things out. Talking together often may keep things from getting out of hand.



Fathers and Babies Need Time Together



Being the father of a seven-month-old baby is great. The fun is just starting. At this age, your baby is much more active. He enjoys playing. He wants to move around on his own. He wants to explore everything.

Make sure your house is "baby-proof." Your baby will put anything into his mouth. He will poke his fingers into everything. Be sure that unused electrical outlets have covers. Put medicines and cleaning products out of your baby's reach.

Crawl around the floor of your house. Look for dangerous things, such as electrical cords and sharp objects. That way, you can see the room and the objects in the room the same way your baby sees them.

After your house is safe, get down on the floor with your baby. Fathers and babies need time together. Put a toy just out of his reach and coax him to push himself toward it. Don't push too hard if he's not ready.



Here are some other games to play with him:

- ★ Roll a soft ball to him and let him pick it up.
- ★ Play peek-a-boo.
- ★ Play clapping games with him.
- ★ Smile and clap when he does what he is trying to do.
- ☆ Hug and comfort him when he gets upset because he can't do things.



Plan a time to be with your baby. This can be during a feeding time, when he gets a bath, at bedtime or any time that works for you. He will love it.

You're his daddy. It's okay for you to do things differently from the way your baby's mother does things.

Know your baby's caregiver

Take time to talk with your baby's caregiver. Be clear about the care you want for your baby. Talk about what you want the caregiver to do. Talk about your baby's habits. Talk about his likes and dislikes.

At this age, a baby starts to feel afraid of strangers. Be sure to let your baby get used to his caregiver before you leave them alone together.



Take Time for Your Baby

By now, you may have returned to work or school. When you get home from work or school, you have already put in a long day.

You may feel like getting your baby to bed as soon as possible so you can relax. But quiet time with your baby can be a way to renew your tired body and to have some fun.

Plan to spend time with your baby every night. Your baby is going through a time that is exciting for him. He is learning new things every day. He is learning to talk, creep and feed himself. He needs your praise when he tries to do new things.

Hug him often. Play with him every day. Babies love games like peek-a-boo.

At this age, he loves to imitate the sounds you make. Make a sound and then let him try to make the same sound. He can say things like "ba," "ma," and "da."

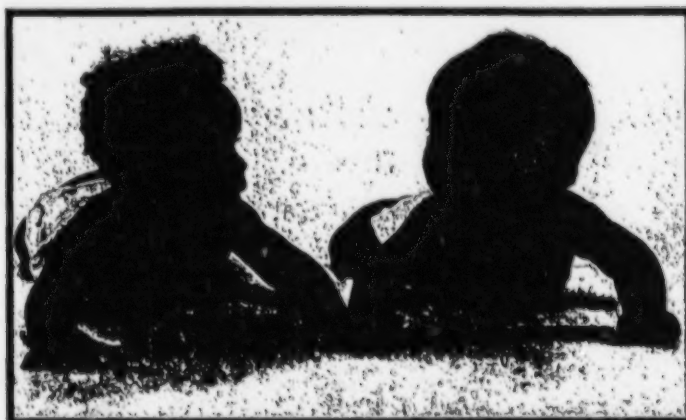
He loves to look in the mirror at himself and at you. He will laugh and make happy gurgling sounds when he sees himself. He is learning the difference between your reflection in the mirror and the real you.

Rock him. Read to him. Sing songs with rhyming words. All of these things will make your baby happy. He will reward you with smiles, laughs and hugs.

You can learn more about how to teach your baby as he grows. Talk to your doctor or clinic. They may have a list of helpful books, videos, classes and Internet sites.



Fun on the Floor



As your baby grows, so does his interest in the world. He wants to explore his world. Here are some things he can do while playing on the floor. These are things that will help him learn and grow.

- ★ Sit your baby on the floor and put a large empty plastic container in front of him. Hold a small ball over the container and drop it in. Do it a few times and then give him the ball.
- ★ Encourage him to drop it into the container.
- ★ Put your baby on the floor. Give him several soft balls to play with.
- ★ Put your baby on the floor. Place several toys around him. Pick each one up and name it. Hand it to your baby. You can use a cup, a toy telephone, a doll, a spoon, a ball, a block, a stuffed animal or other toys.
- ★ While playing games and having fun, talk to him about the things you are doing.



Early Intervention and Your Baby's Developing Skills



Children learn skills as they grow. These skills happen by certain ages. A child learns skills at his own pace. You can see how your baby is doing. Watch when he starts to crawl, walk, talk and feed himself.

If you are concerned that your baby is learning skills too slowly, call your doctor. You can also call 1-800-695-0285 to get information. The call is free. When you call, you will be told how to contact the early intervention program in your state. Staff of your state's early intervention program can assist you in finding help in your state.

What is an early intervention program?

An early intervention program helps children from birth to age three. Early intervention staff can help your baby learn to roll over, sit up, crawl and grasp toys.

They also help children who are having problems with seeing, hearing and talking.

How does an early intervention program help? It can help your child with needed services and also help you join a support group.

Your family and early intervention staff can work together to plan services. These services teach basic skills and can be done in your home or during child care.



Baby Games

Your seven-month-old loves to play. Here are some games you can play with him:

- ★ Squeeze one of your baby's toys to make it squeak. Then hide it under a blanket while he is watching you. Let him try to find it.
- ★ Bang two toys or objects together in front of your baby. Then let him try it, too.
- ★ Give your baby one end of a towel or scarf and you take the other. Gently pull on your end.
- ★ Cut out large, colorful pictures of objects from magazines. Paste the pictures on paper to make a book for your baby. Sit your baby on your lap and talk to him about each picture.
- ★ Let your baby play with musical toys, such as bells. Make sure that none of the parts can come loose.





Safety Corner

Here are some tips for keeping your baby safe and healthy:

Basic safety tips

- ★ Check the temperature of your baby's bath water before you put him into the tub.
- ★ If you can, set your hot water heater to 120 degrees or less. Hot water can burn your baby's skin.
- ★ Never leave your baby alone in the bath. Never leave him alone in water, even in a small amount of water. Never leave him alone near any water, not even a mop pail or a basin with water in it.
- ★ Never shake or hit your baby.
- ★ Never smoke around your baby.
- ★ Never sip from a hot drink while holding your baby.
- ★ Never cook at a hot stove while holding your baby.

Crib safety

- ★ Crib mattresses should fit snugly. There should be no gaps between the mattress and the sides of the crib.
- ★ The mattress should not be covered with plastic of any kind.
- ★ The slats on the sides of the crib should be 2 3/8 inches apart, or even closer. Here is a 2 3/8-inch line:

It can help you to measure the spaces between the crib slats.

To learn more about safety, you can call the Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772 or visit their Web site at www.cpsc.gov/.



Car safety

- ★ Make sure the car seat is used properly.
- ★ Buckle your baby in his car seat in the back seat of your car. The child seat should face the rear of the car.
- ★ Babies should never ride in the front seat of a car.
- ★ Never hold your baby in your lap while you are driving.
- ★ Never leave your baby in a car alone.

Families who cannot afford a car safety seat can contact the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. They can provide information on resources that help low-income families purchase or borrow child car seats. You can call them at 1-800-424-9393 or visit their Web site at www.nhtsa.dot.gov/.

Safety with pets

- ★ Never leave your baby alone with a pet, even if the pet is gentle.



Including Your Baby's Brothers and Sisters



Your baby's brothers and sisters can help him grow and learn. Include them in activities with your baby. This can help them get along better together.

You and your older children can sing a song or read a story to your baby. The baby will enjoy this.

Your older children can help you at the baby's bath time. They can help when you are changing his diaper.

A brother or sister needs to be old enough, mature enough and aware of how to take care of your baby before you can even consider leaving him with an older brother or sister, even for a short period of time. Most older brothers and sisters must be at least in their teens and have had a lot of experience handling the baby under your direct supervision before you can consider leaving them alone together.

Playing together

Playing with his brothers and sisters lets your baby learn new things. He may learn how to touch, watch and listen in new ways. He may learn to imitate in new ways.

Playing with his brothers and sisters helps teach your baby how to do things with others.



Plenty of Love for All



Here are some tips to help both your baby and your older children feel secure and loved:

- ★ Set aside a time to be alone with your older children. Let them pick an activity they would like to do.
- ★ Tell them stories about what you did with them when they were babies.
- ★ When you are doing things with your baby, let your older children take part. For example, let them help pick out a book to read to their siblings and sit with you when you read to your baby.
- ★ Teach your older children how to play some of the games described in this magazine with the baby under your supervision.
- ★ After you put your baby to bed one night, have a pizza party or special meal with your older children.



Information Resources for Families

Families who are enrolled in the WIC program (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) can get information on breastfeeding, formula feeding and nutrition at their local WIC office. Families eligible for WIC receive nutrition counseling and supplemental foods such as baby formula, milk and cereal. To find the WIC office nearest you, call your state health department or visit the WIC Web site at www.fns.usda.gov/wic/. Many public libraries offer free access to the Internet and provide help for first-time users.

For information about early childhood education initiatives, you may contact the U.S. Department of Education at 1-800-USA-LEARN or visit the Web site at www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/teachingouryoungest/.

To learn about child care options, you may contact the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Care Aware by phone at 1-800-424-2246 or visit their Web site at www.childcareaware.org/.

For more information and resources on postpartum depression, breastfeeding and many other women's health issues call The National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC) at 1-800-994-9662 (1-800-994-WOMAN). You can visit their Web site at www.4woman.org/.



To learn more about breastfeeding, you may call La Leche League at 1-800-LALECHE or visit their Web site at www.lalecheleague.org/.

To learn more about free or low-cost health insurance for children, you can call the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Insure Kids Now program at 1-877-KIDSNOW. You can also visit their Web site at www.insurekidsnow.gov/.

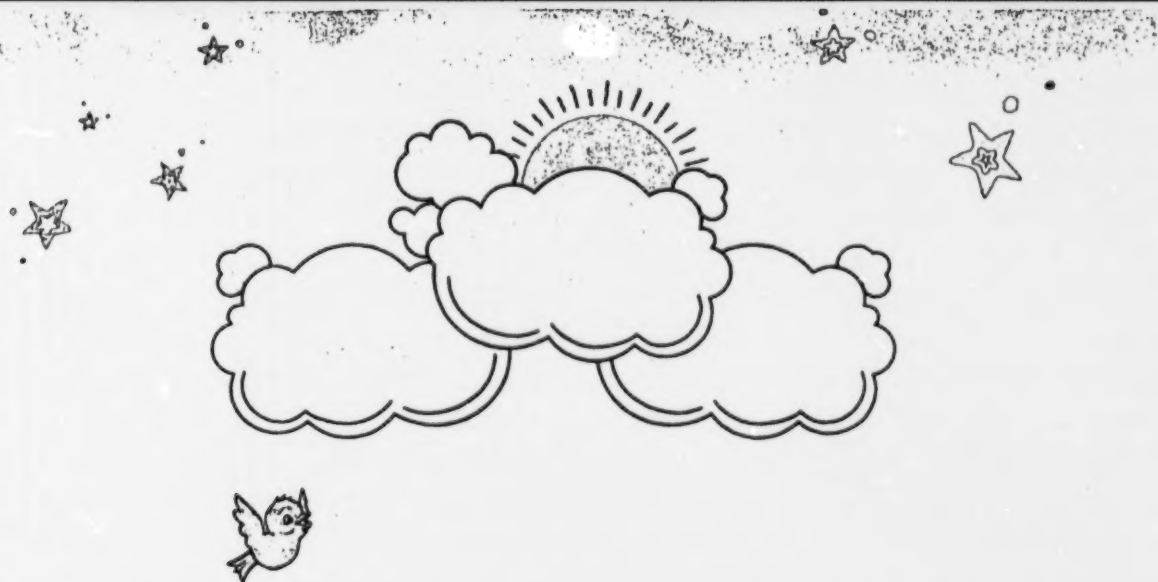
The American Association of Poison Control Centers' (AAPCC) poison control hotline, 1-800-222-1222, should be on your list of emergency numbers. To learn more, you can visit the AAPCC Web site at www.aapcc.org/.

Families who cannot afford a car safety seat can contact the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. They can provide information on resources that help low-income families purchase or borrow child car seats. You may call them at 1-800-424-9393 or visit their Web site at www.nhtsa.dot.gov/.

To learn more about safety, you can call the Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772 or visit their Web site at www.cpsc.gov/.

For information on disabilities and disability-related issues for families, you can call the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY) at 1-800-695-0285 or visit their Web site at www.nichcy.org/.





Coming Next Month

Mealtime with Your Eight-Month-Old

Reading to Your Baby

Your Baby's Brain

Floor Time

...and much more!



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